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ABSTRACT

Prepared as part of the evaluation of the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP), this report offers descriptions of promising practices in composition instruction. It explains the selection criteria and classification scheme used and describes practices in the following four categories: (1) structuring of writing programs, (2) teaching the elements of writing, (3) teaching the process of composing, and (4) evaluating the writing program. (RL)

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EVALUATION OF THE BAY AREA WRITING PROJECT

A Technical Report

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Compendium of Promising Practices in Composition Instruction

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BAWP Evaluation
July 1979

COMPENDIUM OF PROMISING PRACTICES
IN COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION

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Compendium of Promising Practices

in Composition Instruction

I. Selection Criteria

The field of composition instruction is not immune to momentary fads and gimmicks; "promising practices" come and go as speedily as publishers or teachers can invent new ways of packaging old truths. Of the vast array of practices used in the teaching of writing, how might we select those which seem to hold more than ordinary promise, and so be worth listing as a reference for teachers, researchers, evaluators of writing programs, and curriculum developers?

We have found five criteria which make a useful starting point for selection. Almost none of the practices included in the following index can be said to satisfy all of them, but each of those we have chosen to call "promising" meets at least two or three of these standards:

- professional dissemination: techniques presented at national or state professional conventions, by inservice or pre-training programs, or in professional publications are defined more broadly than the particular practice of one teacher, but are also more precisely or narrowly identified than many "traditional" practices which are so generally used they can hardly be listed as "promising," but are rather "established" practices which have become almost unconscious states of mind. Professional dissemination marks those practices which members of the profession wish to make conscious, and thus, for a time, new in the minds of teachers.

- timeliness: although historically the profession has unearthed or created many practices for introduction or review by teachers, we have limited our selection to those which seem to be in widespread use currently, receiving special attention from teachers in the last five years, although they may also have been in use previously.

- ease of dissemination: some practices are particularly easy to adopt, or adapt, by a wide variety of teachers in a wide variety of settings; others seem to be cost-effective, or have an immediate appeal to teachers so that training is made easier.

- observable effects: although research is incomplete or contradictory on most instructional methods in the English

language arts, some -- like sentence-combining -- yield quantitative measures of program effect; other practices may affect teacher or student attitudes or other aspects of student writing behavior. Promising methods of measuring and evaluating effects are included in this index.

- broad rather than narrow effects: most of the practices included below affect more than one part of writing performance or also affect other language or thinking skills, because they are based on theories of learning that extend beyond the language lesson.

Practices have been drawn principally from three sources: teacher/consultant presentations for the Bay Area Writing Project and other National Writing Project sites; papers, presentations, and publications from the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE), and the 1979 conventions of the California Association of Teachers of English (CATE) and the Central Council of that organization (CCTE); and finally, from the 1979 Ottowa Conference on the teaching and learning of writing. Wherever possible references to teacher-originated practices include the teacher-author or presenter of a specific practice and the name of the organization which received or published the presentation. Where a practice can be attributed to a published author, full references are offered.

Undoubtedly, teachers and others will recognize practices here which are attributable to several different sources, although we have attributed them to only one. For these oversights, please excuse us. We invite comments, especially notifying us of errors in describing practices or of glaring omissions.

II. Classification

Sometimes teachers and writers present very similar practices under different names. Sometimes they present very different kinds of practices which, however, address the same kinds of purposes. To facilitate use of this index, then, we have grouped our list of practices into four very general categories, with these in turn divided into several sub-classifications. A few practices, of course, will be found in more than one category. These are cross-referenced to their initial appearance in the compendium. The index lists all entries alphabetically, with page references to their descriptions. Within a description of one practice, we have sometimes referred to other practices. We have underlined the names of those practices which have their own descriptive entries elsewhere in the anthology.

In presenting this complex and diverse array of promising practices, we will use the following classifications:

A. Structuring of Writing Programs

1) Classroom management techniques, general approaches reflecting specific attitudes toward the teaching and learning of writing; roles and relations of student-writer and writing-teacher; developing the student's resources for writing.

2) Curriculum Sequencing: Sequences of Instruction in writing, reflecting ideas about development of writing abilities, or needs of schools and classrooms for sequencing.

3) Contexts of writing: a) writing in English, language, or literature courses; b) writing in composition courses or writing labs; c) writing in the content areas; d) writing for real world audiences beyond the classroom; e) writing for student publications.

B. Elements of Writing

1) Mastery of transcription and mechanics of writing.

2) Mastery of word skills: vocabulary, spelling, diction.

3) Mastery of sentence forms.

4) Genre conventions, mastery of discourse level skills (e.g., point of view, thesis formation, paragraphing, coherence, cloze procedure).

5) Style sheet.

C. Process of Composing

1) Thinking and imagining strategies; getting ideas; teacher-provided stimuli for writers.

2) Developing fluency; from thought to hand to paper.

3) Invention, pre-writing; strategies for shaping a piece, for finding a plan, organizing information.

4) Writing to assignment, from self or other; problem solving strategies, juggling constraints, using forms or patterns.

5) Revision, editing, post-writing; strategies; moving from writer to reader-based prose; revising with or without intervention; kinds of intervention (peer, teacher criticism); rewarding revision.

6) Integrating the process; simultaneous writing, planning, revision vs. dividing the process: uses of concentration of pre-writing, writing, or re-writing stages, value of the suspended editor, role of consciousness of process and strategies; sequences and inverted sequences in the process of composing (fluency-shape-correctness; form to idea; etc.).

D. Evaluation and the Writing Program

1) Drills, dry runs as practice and testing heats; indirect measures of mastery of writing elements.

2) Evaluating whole discourse holistically.

3) Evaluating whole discourse analytically.

4) Making use of assessment results: reporting to students, parents, staff; approaches to grades and credit for achievement or ability.

5) Direct and indirect measures of effect; long and short term measures; assessing attitudes toward writing, gains in achievement level, etc.

Other classifications are possible, and may have been more useful, of course. This one had the rare virtue of allowing us to fit every practice we had collected into some sort of framework, with no miscellany. We expect that most professionals in the field will be able to make additions in almost every general area, and that perhaps together they might even create a miscellaneous stockpile of good ideas. We hope, however, that the classification will provide a good working basis for examining the wealth of instructional ideas in the field in a systematic and com-

parative way, and that the list compiled here may provide a useful compendium to stimulate future research, evaluation, and curriculum development.

III

COMPENDIUM

A. Structuring of Writing Programs

1) Classroom management techniques, general approaches reflecting specific attitudes toward the teaching and learning of writing; roles and relations of student-writer and writing-teacher; developing the student's resources for writing.

2) Curriculum development: sequences of instruction in writing reflecting ideas about development of writing abilities, or needs of schools and classrooms for sequencing.

3) Contexts of writing: a) writing in English, language, or literature courses; b) writing in composition courses or writing labs; c) writing in the content areas; d) writing for real world audiences beyond the classroom; e) writing for student publications.

(A-1) Student to Teacher Messages

Some classrooms provide a letter box or other arrangement to encourage students to write to their teacher as a "trusted other." Britton described the use of expressive writing in the learning process, and the importance of writing for a trusted other where one can take risks, ask questions, not pretend to know everything. (Language and Learning; The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18.) Martin, et al. (Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum) describe how children in math and science classes wrote at the end of a day's lesson, explaining to their teacher what they understand and what questions they still have. These messages are seen as direct communication at a personal level, not as performances to be judged, as are so many school tasks. The advantages of this practice are three-fold:

1) The teacher is able to discover what students know and wish to know, how they feel about what they are learning, what they would like to do next, etc. He may then incorporate this information into his lesson plans, which will then be more relevant to student needs. The "messages" provide a kind of ongoing needs assessment and evaluation of his efforts.

2) The student has an opportunity to review the work of the day, to think creatively about and to evaluate the class lesson, to feel involved in planning what happens next, to recognize his own questions and areas of confusion -- all of these resulting in his becoming a more active and goal-directed learner.

3) The student discovers that he may use writing for "real" communication with another person, rather than merely as a vehicle for doing an assignment.

(A-1) The Writing Conference: One-to-One
(Also called "Conferencings")

Many teachers espouse one-to-one tutoring in writing. Composition workshops and laboratories (e.g., Laney College, Oakland, Ca., and the Student Learning Center, U.C. Berkeley) are designed to provide tutorial help for basic or handicapped writers, but many teachers in traditional classrooms find it possible to provide individual writing conferences. Sometimes lay readers or advanced students are used as tutors to provide individual help.

The writing conference presumes that a student has completed a piece of work, and that face-to-face discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the writing he has done will be more useful to him than written comments, a letter or number grade, or a prescription of set exercises. Any of these other responses may occur in conjunction with the conference.

The individual conference is enormously flexible, of course, since the teacher is able to focus on any problem, from basic transcription difficulties or idea generation, to large discourse design or problems in point of view. The tutor can serve as active listener, allowing the writer to work out his ideas in oral composition, can elicit information or ideas with careful questioning, and can explain points of grammar or composition as the student's need dictates.

Two Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) publications describing the Laney tutorial writing lab: Marlene Griffith's Fluency, Shape, Correctness; and Jerry Herman's The Tutoring and the Writing Student: A Case Study

See also, Ellen Nold, "Alternatives in Mad-Hatterism" in Linguistics, Stylistics, and the Teaching of English; and Dan Murray, A Writer Teaches Writing.

(A-1) Peer-Response Groups

Also called peer feedback groups, reading/writing groups, sharing groups, or editing groups, the concept is based on the notion that learning writers at any stage can provide intelligent and helpful responses to one another, and can improve their writing:

1) by hearing what a group of readers feels about their work;
2) by reading and responding critically and carefully to the work of others.

One student shares his writing with members of his group, either by reading aloud from his own papers, or distributing copies. Readers may respond orally or in writing or both. Suggestions may be spontaneous or may follow a set of structured questions. The student writer should be the final authority in choosing which suggestions to adopt and which to ignore.

Peter Elbow (Writing Without Teachers) is usually credited with popularizing this notion. Mary Kay Healy of the Bay Area Writing Project has applied it for years, and disseminated it widely, including examples of teams of two students offering responses during the composing process to entire classes sharing and responding to examples of student work. Entire schools have introduced peer response groups into all language classes (e.g., Las Lomas, Acalanes District, California) and reported that students become progressively more adept in their role of critic/responder. The technique has been adopted widely by adult writing groups. Some teachers report difficulty in establishing the rapport and seriousness needed for a group of students to function well as readers of one another's work. Healy observes that peer response groups are especially unproductive at first where students have little or no experience with small group work in general. Students who have worked independently or in small groups are more ready to learn the particular skills and attitudes needed for the peer response group.

Like all small group instructional techniques, the response groups have the great advantage of providing more different audiences and more attention and response to each student's work than an individual teacher can possibly provide.

Thom Hawkins, Group Inquiry Techniques for Teaching Writing, NCTE, Theory and Research into Practice Monograph, 1976.

(A-1) Brainstorming

Familiar to businesses and research groups, the technique of brainstorming requires that people engaged in solving a single problem pool their ideas and examine them together for a good solution or set of solutions. Brainstorming works on the assumption that many heads are better than one, partly because one person's idea, while not itself an ideal solution, may trigger off another idea for someone else. Brainstorming allows fresh perspectives, and for students has several advantages:

1) it becomes apparent that there is more than one way to say or do something; that the best solution may not necessarily be the first one that comes to mind;

2) when the brainstorming is over, all students start writing with a similar pool of ideas and information; no student need begin with absolutely nothing to say.

Brainstorming is most effective in an atmosphere of trust, where the most absurd ideas are added to the list as seriously as the most obvious or intelligent ones. Participants should be taught not to waste time commenting on the virtues or deficiencies of ideas already proposed, but should concentrate on producing new ones. When the contributions begin to sound redundant, it is time to move on to selecting workable ideas, or beginning to actually write.

Although brainstorming has dramatic motivational effects, with few if any students failing to participate in a well-run session, some students find the transition from the group discussion to private writing a difficult one.

(A-1) Small Group Problem-Solving

A basic classroom strategy which can be applied to almost any material being covered. The various methods of grouping include self-selected groups, teacher assigned groups, arbitrary groups based on drawing lots or position in the alphabet. Of these, teacher assigned groups can avoid dangers inherent in other kinds of group forming, if the teacher has begun to know the students, their interests, social needs, writing skills. Theories of small group instruction suggest groups of 5 or 6 as maximum, with each group having at least one reasonably skilled student, one social leader, and with weaker students scattered over several groups. A variation is to cluster students of similar skills levels.

In writing instruction, small groups can be used to provide editorial and revision assistance (see peer-feedback techniques), but they can also be used for other activites, from brainstorming ideas, researching information (pooled information is usually richer than what can be gathered by one individual), making charts or outlines, or doing sentence combining or other exercises where the teacher wishes students to compare several solutions to an exercise and choose the best. Whenever discussion of student solutions is needed, the small group allows more students to be heard by their peers in a shorter period of time. Frequently, teachers ask groups to present their chosen solution to the entire class.

See Thom Hawkins, Group Inquiry Techniques for Teaching Writing, NCTE, Theory and Reserach into Practice Monograph, 1976.

(A-1) Individualized Instruction

Suiting assignments to needs and/or interests of individual students either through creation of individualized study packets, or learning centers, or some independent study/contract arrangement.

(A-1) Process Journals

Introduced during the New York BAWP Summer Program by Sondra Perl, the idea of keeping process journals has spread to other writing project sites.

Process journals allow teachers-in-training or students to pay special attention to the writing process, on the theory that becoming aware of one's own writing strategies allows one to improve them. During or after working on a given assignment, the writer takes a few minutes to comment in a journal on what parts of the process were difficult, what strategies he used to solve certain problems, what, in retrospect, he discovered about the way he writes best. For teachers, this kind of introspection provides insights valuable in helping students. Inservice teachers share their journals. For students, sharing journals helps show that there are many ways to accomplish the same ends. Students may learn both from observing their own processes, and from hearing about how others approach the writing task.

(A-1) In-Class Interviews

A getting-acquainted, trust building activity used by many teachers at the beginning of a course, and involving writing at several stages. Students interview the teacher (like a press corps interviewing a celebrity) or one another. (Planning good interview questions may involve brainstorming, with results written on the board or dittoed for use by interviewers.)

The resulting interviews may be written up to share with the class, or may be transformed into "introductions," with each student presenting one other student to the class, including all relevant information gleaned in the interview.

The technique establishes some practical uses of writing, provides for oral practice and social skill development, and serves to introduce students to other members of a class at the beginning of the year.

See also Oral History in (C-1)"Community as Resource;"and Writing for the School Community in (A-3)"Varying Audiences."

(A-1, C-1) Self-exploration Activities

Many writing teachers believe that good writers are aware of their own values and attitudes, and that knowledge of the self is a primary source of material for writing. Exercises in values clarification, discussions and writing about "Who I am," field trips followed by a sharing of impressions and reactions, and by written introspection as well as records of what was seen, are kinds of activities intended to help students, especially adolescents, find clearer points of view from which to write, and develop a stronger sense that they have something to say. These activities work well in curricula based on the Moffet sequence of writing from experience to idea.

The "I-Search" by Ken Macrorie provides a model for self-exploration for the purpose of writing.

(A-1) Oral Language Practice

There is some evidence and a strong belief among many teachers who have had experience with young or basic writers, that oral language is primary, in the sense that proficiency in oral language is a pre-requisite for proficiency in written language. Hence, basic writing classes incorporate as much practice in oral language as possible, supporting students in their attempt to express ideas or make descriptions in talking to one another.

This idea is carried further when oral rehearsal of ideas is seen as a helpful prelude to composing, especially for beginning writers. Groups or teams of two can be set up to act as listeners for oral composing, and then to aid the writer in remembering what he planned when the time comes to write. ("Talk-Write" is a classroom activity presented by Vince Wixon, Oregon WP.) Listeners can also be trained to become better questioners, and can actually participate in the composing process, as they ordinarily do in conversation, by letting the composer know what is interesting, what is unclear, what needs more elaboration, etc.

(A-1) Daily Writing (In or Out of Class)

The general technique of providing time for and assigning writing to be done each day has seen a variety of uses. Ten minute, in-class daily writings in student journals have been used as simple fluency practice, in which case no further use is made of the writings. Other teachers have used journals as source-books for writing ideas. Some have specified free-writing, or forced-flow writing, also called stream-of-consciousness writing. Others have used daily writings for structured exercises on given topics, or with specific stimuli, or directions to use certain kinds of sentence structures.

The basic principle is to provide regular practice in generating prose (or poetry) without making every writing occasion a major production. Daily writings are not graded, are rarely even corrected by a teacher, but they may be shared (as in Caplan's "Showing not Telling" program), and are almost always credited as student work.

Daily writing and journal writing, for developing fluency, may result in expression of intimate personal perceptions or experiences. Provisions should be made to protect student privacy. The purposes of daily writing -- to teach students to write for themselves as well as for others, to increase fluency by suspending the "editor" within each writer -- are counteracted if any attempt is made to grade or criticize these writings. Students may draw on these writings to produce other work to be judged by a reader.

(A-1) The Teacher as Participant

Many teachers have discovered that participating in all class activities, which means primarily writing to all of their own assignments and sharing their writing whenever students are asked to share theirs, has several desirable effects:

1) They are able to remove themselves from their role as judge, and be perceived rather as fellow-writers, which allows student-writers to receive their comments and criticisms less defensively in some cases; in other cases, students feel less bound to make the suggested changes, but take responsibility to create their own solutions.

2) They are able to model undefensive behavior when students criticize their efforts; they are able to demonstrate that even adults do not produce perfect writing on the first try every time, but will probably want to revise, redraft, etc.

3) They are able to detect the special difficulties presented by the assignment, and clarify for themselves what they intended the assignment to provide for student writers.

4) They are able to model honesty, vividness, use of details, or other qualities they wish to have their students bring to the writing process, and which can sometimes be taught more easily by example than by exposition.

(A-1) Journal Writing (See also Daily Writing)

Keeping a journal, or folder of informal writing, provides the student with a record of the observations, ideas, words, phrases, poems, projects, etc. he has created during the year. He may find these interesting simply as a history of his year, or may use the collection as a resource for more finished writing.

The journal keeping introduces students to a particular purpose of writing -- the keeping of personal records, the recording of thoughts or ideas one does not wish to lose, although they may have no immediate application to work being done.

Some teachers use journals as workbooks, where practice runs or exercises are recorded which will not be graded, but will be shared. Others declare journals the private property of the writer, written not to be shared except by the writer's choice.

(A-1, C-1) Right-Brain Activities

Recent research on right-brain, left-brain differences has been popularly applied to teaching writing by suggesting that analytic skills needed for some academic writing have been emphasized to the exclusion of synthesizing holistic perception skills which add richness and coherence to student writing, as well as allowing students to write better poetry and fiction.

"Right-brain" activities are those which are intended to aid the student in finding patterns, making connections, staying in touch with his sources of inspiration. These may include such things as poetry writing, making lists of personal characteristics and weaving these into mandala patterns, keeping dream journals in which the student records images and ideas from his dreams which he later uses in composing, free associating words from music or pictures, naming the colors of sounds (or vice versa), tastes or colors or sounds that may represent particular people or days of the week.

(A-2) Internal to External Narrative Point of View

Another sequence of instruction developed by James Moffett is based on the different stances taken by writers in relation to their material. The short story anthology, Points of View, edited by Moffett and McElheny, describe the movement of the narrator's voice from internal to increasingly external stances, producing such forms as interior monologue, dramatic monologue, letter writing, diary writing, memoirs, third person/one-character emphasis, third person/two- or multiple-character emphasis, etc. Some writing classes use the book to model points of view and have students compose from each stance.

(A-2) Aims of Discourse as Sequence of Instruction

Some teachers are attempting to apply James Kinneavy's classification of the aims of discourse to a sequence of instruction at the highschool or college level in composition courses. Kinneavy's A Theory of Discourse lists the aims as :

expressive - writing focused on the writer
persuasive - writing focused on the listener
referential - writing focused on the referent, or real world
literary - writing focused on the "signal," or language itself.

It is not clear how these aims might be arranged in a meaningful sequence or progression from least to most difficult. Instead, we may gather from James Britton's work (Language and Learning, etc.) that expressive writing is primary and may provide a stage in the development of writing abilities, but also a stage in the process of composing each piece of writing. Persuasive, literary, and referential are all more reader-based than expressive writing, and must take into account some of the genre conventions of each class. Presumably, the order in which one practices these three aims is less important than the inclusion of all three in the curriculum.

(A-2) From Experience to Idea

(Also called, from Concrete to Abstract in some schools)

The notion of sequencing writing exercises so that the student moves gradually from writing about his own real or imagined experience to writing about ideas is suggested by Jim Moffett in several of his works. Moffett believes that young children learn to write most easily in concrete terms, as story tellers, first, then as observers of the real world. Their discourse is largely concrete, with only occasional abstractions. Later, as they learn to talk about ideas, they are more able to sustain abstract discourse, which they must then learn to intersperse with concrete observations.

Specifically, during the highschool years, the attempt to teach children to write about ideas in preparation for academic writing often by-passes the student's own experience. He writes always about other people's ideas, in the language he must take from the people who first express these ideas. Instead, Moffett argues, the student should write first out of his own experience, ultimately formulating and expressing ideas about that experience, which he can express in his own, increasingly abstract, language. Writing about ideas, when it developes naturally out of writing about one's own experience, is not so likely to become writing about meaning.

A particular curriculum sequence designed to reflect the Moffett sequence of development is offered by James Pierce, BAWP, with additional assignments by Catharine Keech, BAWP. Assignments are gathered around a general theme like WORK, or HOME, and involve the students in descriptions, letters, autobiographical narratives, gradually demanding report-writing skills, involving some research, and finally asking for literary criticism. At each level of greater abstraction the student is encouraged to use concrete details or insights from the previous levels.

(A-2) From Description to Exposition

Alexander Bain (1867) divided discourse into five modes: description, narration, argument, exposition, and poetry. His division has formed the basis for sequencing writing assignments for a majority of English instructors ever since. Current critics of Bain argue that the categories are not discrete: that description is used in all the other forms, that narrations may be used in argument and exposition,etc. Nonetheless, practice in these five modes has remained a popular sequencing of instruction, possibly because it facilitates teaching. Exercises in description can remain short, allowing the student to concentrate on sentence level or word level skills, as well as his powers of observation. It seems ideally suited for younger students or beginning writers. Narration seems to demand only description and chronological arrangement. Argument and exposition demand more complex kinds of arrangements, and new relations between writer and audience. When the modes are taught in this order, we see that they reflect a theory of child development similar to Moffett's "experience to idea" sequence. The difference is that in traditional instruction, argument and exposition were not necessarily based on a student's own experience or ideas, as they are in Moffett's theory.

(A-2, A-3) Expressive Writing

As defined by James Britton, expressive writing is basic to all writing, as oral language is basic to all discourse. Expressive writing is done for a trusted other, or for the self, and the demands of the reader for clarity or information are not as important as the need of the writer to find his idea for himself. Britton advocates encouraging expressive writing in schools at all levels, but particularly in the early stages of learning, in journals, or messages to peers or teacher, as a way of developing fluency and honesty in writing and as a learning device. When the student is writing for a sympathetic reader, he may temporarily suspend his editing anxieties, and concentrate on capturing his ideas. He learns to use writing as a way of finding out what he is thinking, discovering connections, making plans, asking questions, communicating directly with a particular other whom he trusts. (See National Writing Project Newsletter, May 1979.)

Gradually he is expected to learn that for general audiences or judges he must move from expressive writing to "transactional" writing, or toward "literary" writing. This writing is what Linda Flower (Carnegie Mellon) calls "reader-based" rather than "writer-based" prose, and requires engaging the editor in a writer who reads the writing as the reader will read it. (See writing and editing strategies.)

The sequence, "writer-based" to "reader-based," is seen both as a broad developmental sequence, with older students capable of producing more reader-based prose, and also as a continuing sequence for many writers during the composing process for each discourse.

(A-3) Community as a Resource for Writing Material

Writing from experience, and writing about things in the world outside of school may be as important in motivating good writing as writing for real world audiences. Several publications describe programs which allow students to gather writing material from the community around them:

Foxfire books assemble information on community life, folkways, crafts, and prescribe field trips for students' encounters with the real world.

"A Community Based Independent Study Program," Carter, et al., BAWP monograph, describes a variety of writing activities based on learning programs which take the student out of the classroom to use writing in real life business and social settings.

Oral History Reports: Sarah Harrington (BAWP) history teacher at Berkeley High School, has students choose an older person to interview for his version of the world as it was when... These "oral histories" are recorded by tape or notes, and the student writes a full report, edited and organized to provide coherent reading.

Saturation Reporting: Students work in the tradition of the "new journalism" as described by Tom Wolfe, observing not only the external events at a particular time and place, but recording their own reactions as well. The initial assignment is to write down everything, becoming saturated with details from outside and within. Then students select and revise, keeping as richly detailed an account as possible, but introducing direction and coherence.

The outlets or audiences for such writing are many, and teachers who use these sources for writing ideas are usually concerned to provide a variety of audiences, including but not limited to peers within the classroom.

(A-3) Varying Audiences or Writing Beyond the Classroom

Many teachers have found that students are more highly motivated to write and to revise, and often seem to write better or become more involved in their writing, when their writing provides an encounter with the world outside the classroom. Contexts for writing to audiences other than the teacher or even one's classmates are numerous:

Other classes, same grade level:

Often students are inspired simply when they are allowed to share and respond to work written by students in other classes -- either- anonymously, or with full credit to writer and responder. The anonymous class exchange used by Linda Schwimmer (BAWP) is simply an expansion of the peer response group to include evaluating and responding to work of unknown peers. Writing for such audiences and such responses seems to excite many students.

Different grade levels:

Pat Woodworth (BAWP; see monograph, The Write Occasion) has his sophomore write for freshmen, creating a "Freshperson Handbook" full of advice for how to survive at Tomales High. Other teachers have older children make story books which they deliver and read to younger grades.

The school community:

Student publications, including newspapers, yearbooks, literary magazines, pamphlets, fliers, posters, and bulletin board displays of student writing, are valuable both in providing a wide audience for student writers, and in providing models of writing who are within reach of imitation by the students, unlike most of the models provided by professional writers. Writing for the school community can provide some of the kinds of real world transactions that show the uses of writing, as students campaign for changes in school, or argue for favorite candidates, review literature and film, record events, exercise wit, interview celebrities or outstand- students, teachers and staff, etc.

The larger community

Bruce Reeves, curriculum coordinator at Acalanes District, California, has had students suggest changes in advertisements (some of which have been implemented) and in the bureaucratic language of local and state government documents. Karen McGillivray (Salem Writing Project, Oregon; see NWP Newsletter, I,3) provides a question-answering service for school-aged children across the state. Letters come in requesting information on the arts, politics, science, and students research answers and write responses, keeping files of their information and classifying kinds of questions.

Another writing project teacher (Northern California Writing Project, Chico) reports sharing student papers with adults she encounters daily -- friends, postcarrier, grocery clerks, etc., collecting their comments to add to hers. She believes children have changed their attitude toward writing and the amount of effort they invest since they have been writing for others.

Miles Myers reports a community project in Oakland California (Independent Learning Contracts, by Harter, et al., BAWP monograph) which involves writing on the job and about work in the real world.

(A-3) Varying Purposes in Writing about Literature

The goal of traditional literature classes has been to teach students to write literary criticism, in the form of expository essays about given works or authors. The defense offered for requiring literature classes of this type of almost all students was that they would gain an "appreciation" of literature.

Several educators have challenged the idea that an appreciation of literature or understanding of a praticular work can only be expressed in exposition, much less in straight description or summary, which preceded exposition in some literature writing sequences. These practitioners suggest a variety of alternatives for helping students explore the meaning of what they read, its effect on themselves, its implications and applications to the rest of their world, and the wide range of forms that exist in writing for expressing ideas gained from reading. These alternatives to the literary essay include:

1. Writing beyond the end of the story: Continue the story, write a sequel, or a chapter, or just the next moment. Evaluate the writing done in terms of its congruence with the momentum of the story, its possibility given the established characters, what this ending reveals about the writer's wishes or fears or preferences in story endings, and why the author felt he should stop where he did.
2. Write into the story: Insert a line, a paragraph, a chapter (see modelling); again evaluate what the student's creation adds, what understanding it reveals of forces or characters or relations in the original story. This is particularly appropriate with picaresque works like Huckleberry Finn or Catcher in the Rye. Many children's story books are organized by adding similar elements -- students quickly see the pattern and create new elements that match in form, like writing new verses to an old song.
3. Write from a different point of view. Retell an episode from the point of view of a different character, or the same character later in time. Evaluate solutions for how they change the values and attitudes expressed; this exercise makes it easier for some students to understand and talk about the

author's reasons for telling the story from the point of view he chose. Such perceptions become the materials for later expository essays.

4. Write out of the story. Use an idea, an episode, a character, and lift it from the story, placing it in a new environment. Holden Caufield at your school, or your own version of doomsday science fiction after reading On the Beach. Applying a concept or examining a character in a new setting is intended to help students articulate (in oral discussion, after sharing papers) what some of the common elements are, or what was the key element in the original story that made it successful.

5. Write from the story for yourself. Using some image or idea as a springboard, write your own thoughts, poem, story, essay, on that single image or idea. It is not necessary to make reference to the original story, but it is often possible in discussion for students to explain how they drew their idea from the original story. Peers and teachers can help explore similarities and differences in the original idea and the new realization of it.

6. Write, or role play, interviews with the author, or with various characters; newspaper reports which might have appeared at the time describing events in the book; film scenario for single events or chapters; play director's instructions to an actor who is to play a certain character (how to walk, speak, dress, act, think). All of these, like the ideas above, require students to apply their perceptions of the book, not merely to describe them.

(A-3, B-2,3,4, C-3) Modelling

Modelling or imitation may mean several things to the writing teacher. (B-3,4) Modelling forms requires the student to imitate either sentence forms or whole discourse plans. This may be done very strictly or more loosely, with the model providing a general shape. Games with words, or plays on a reader's expectations, so that the writer makes rapid shifts in direction, are also offered as models for developing an idea.

(A-3, B-2,3,4) Modelling styles requires the student to imitate those characteristics of a writer's sentence formation, discourse forms, word choice, even his level of attention to detail, or whatever, so that what he writes may be almost a parody of the original style, or may be indistinguishable from it. One assignment requiring this kind of imitation, is to have students add a sentence, a paragraph, or a whole chapter, to a given piece of work, so that the rest of the class will be unable to distinguish the added piece from the original writer's composition.

(C-3) Modelling ideas, attitudes, themes, etc. Some teachers (e.g., Fran Claggett, BAWP) use strongly thematic poetry to give students ideas for their own poems or essays (e.g., Wallace Steven's "13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," or Adrian Stoutenberg's "Interior Decorating").

B. Elements of Writing

1) Mastery of transcription and mechanics of writing.

2) Mastery of word skills: vocabulary, spelling, diction.

3) Mastery of sentence forms.

4) Genre conventions, mastery of discourse level skills (e.g., point of view, thesis formation, paragraphing, coherence, cloze precedure).

5) Style sheet.

(B-1) Fluency in Transcription : Forced-flow-writing

Ken Macrorie, like Britton (Expressive writing) emphasizes the importance of suspending the writer's editor while developing ease in moving from thoughts to words to paper. When every act of writing is an exercise in punctuation or spelling, many students are unable to follow the flow of their own thoughts, forgetting what they want to say before they finish writing a sentence. Moffett and Macrorie encourage a writing exercise which requires writers to put pen to paper and keep writing without stopping to re-read or correct for several minutes at a time, as a cure for the over-anxious writer. Griffith describes the need for this kind of cure among adult basic writers (BAWP monograph). Users of this technique and other kinds of "free-writing" or focused free-writing (C-2) point out that such writing is not intended to be the final product, but rather is an exercise in developing fluency, an early stage in composing while one generates ideas, or a learning tool. (See expressive writing, journal writing, A-1.)

For beginning young writers, a great deal of writing without over-attention to transcription errors is advocated by some as a starting place. Others argue for correctness from the beginning, but agree that a great deal of physical practice is necessary for young children to gain ease in transcribing. (See Copying, B-1.)

(B-1) Games and Exercises for Mechanics Skills

Punctuation. Moffett recommends using unpunctuated passages accompanied by a taped reading of the passage to teach the relation between punctuation and the natural pitch, stress, and juncture of oral speech. Children learn to punctuate the passages to represent the sound they hear on the tape.

Research has showed little carry-over of punctuation skills to actual compositions by students who learn punctuation entirely from exercises and rules. Current practice includes teachers who have students learn punctuation and other mechanical rules entirely from their own compositions, or when they demonstrate the need. Others are careful to include opportunities to use new mechanical skills, like punctuating dialogue, in an original composition.

Spelling bees and competitive or cooperative games for teaching basic punctuation, abbreviation spellings, and capitalization schemes are still popular and inventive, and appear to be most effective in the elementary grades when students are willing to play many games for their own sake without demanding that the skills learned be used in the service of something larger.

(B-1,2) Transcription Skills: Copying and Oral Composition

The practice of copying has been attacked by many as not providing beginning writers with the excitement of composing. Teachers have learned to remedy this problem in several ways: the child composes orally, with the teacher taking dictation; the child copies the teacher's writing to make his story; or the children compose a sentence together, which an able transcriber puts on the board for all the writers to copy.

Many children enjoy copying favorite poems, titles, advertisements, or even whole stories when they are learning to transcribe. They may be allowed to compose orally into tape recorders throughout the time they are developing adequate transcription skills. The teacher or lay helper may type their compositions for them to read.

(B-1,2) Spelling and Vocabulary Aids

"My Own Dictionary" is an empty exercise book with alphabet dividers given especially to beginning writers with spelling or transcription difficulties. When a student needs a word he can't write, he asks someone to write it in his dictionary, from which he may copy it as needed. More advanced forms of this idea lead to student-created thesauri which gather synonyms and antonyms from a variety of sources, but which appeal to the student, or which he feels he will need.

(B-2) Diction; Word Power

Increasing word power through attention to diction is not to be confused with vocabulary building, although clearly these two activities reinforce one another. Diction is a matter of choosing the best word from among several possible. Considerations include connotation and tone (N. Postman, Exploring Our Language; see discussion under cloze procedure); or sound, which becomes especially important in poetry; or level of abstractness. Rebecca Caplan has developed a program for improving writing through practice in use of concrete words and phrases, which she calls "Showing, not Telling." (See BAWP monograph evaluating this program.)

(B-2) Vocabulary Building

"The Word Cache" is an old idea which continues to be revived in new forms: treasure chests, boxes, lists, index cards, posters, etc., allow students to collect favorite "vivid" words. These may be grouped as synonyms for old, tired words (think of all the words you could use instead of "get"), or as parts of speech. Collections may be illustrated. Word caches also contribute to spelling skills for many students.

(B-2,3,4) Cloze Procedure; Completing Prose Passages

The cloze procedure was developed to teach and test reading skills by G.V. Cozens, and consists of passages of prose with key words deleted. E.D. Hirsch in his Philosophy of Composition has suggested using a similar procedure to evaluate the readability of prose composed by student writers. Bereiter at the Ontario Institute reports developing assignments which ask students to delete single words from their writing and seeing if other students can find appropriate substitutes.

It is not clear to what extent the method is used to test and strengthen the student's ability to make right word choices, or to what extent it is meant to encourage writers to write such clear prose that their intention will be evident even when words are missing. The practice has promise as a research tool, but is not as yet widespread as a teaching device.

Completing passages has two more common forms. N. Postman's language test, Exploring our Language, includes exercises in diction which give choices of words in parentheses throughout a passage written in a distinctive style. The student chooses the word which seems best to fit the tone of the passage. This exercise is intended to encourage discussion of style, tone, connotations of words, author's intent, etc., as well as to increase the student writer's awareness of his own choices.

Bereiter also advocates exercises allowing students to write endings for unfinished stories. (See also Varying Purposes in Writing about Literature, and Modelling.)

(B-3) Sentence-Combining

Practices in creating single sentences out of several separate, simple sentences by embedding elements. Derived from the insights of transformational grammar, together with a study by Frances Christensen of modern prose, sentence-combining generally creates "cumulative" or "layered" sentences in which elements of meaning are added through participial phrases, appositives, and noun clauses rather than the traditionally taught structures of the complex sentence: subordinate clauses and relative clauses.

Three basic sentence-combining texts are popular: Christensen's Notes Toward a New Rhetoric describes the "generative sentence" and suggests applications of the same principles at the paragraphing level. William Strong's Sentence-Combining: A Composing Book and Frank O'Hare's Sentence-Craft, an Elective Course in Writing include exercises with varying degrees of control on how sentences are to be combined (the Strong exercises are generally more open to creative experimentation), with little theory.

Research on the effects of sentence-combining training show dramatic results, with students increasing the amount of imbedding or layering of meanings and reducing the number of single-idea sentences. It has not been established to what extent this increase can be called "improvement" in writing, although Kellogg Hunt, Walter Loban, and others have described the cumulative sentence as typical of more mature writers -- a late development in writing skills. Hence, for some, the combined sentence has become synonymous with "syntactic maturity." Counts of sentence types reveal that sentence combining is associated to some degree with higher holistic scores, but it is not clear whether this is a causative relation, or merely the fact that more effective writers use more such sentences incidentally to accomplishing their purposes.

(B-4) Genre Schemes, Discourse Conventions, Special Formats

Genre schemes: a term defined by Carl Bereiter to refer to the set of behaviors and understandings which a student operationalizes in responding to any assignment. (e.g., the assignment, "explain this quotation" elicits certain notions about what aspects of the quote to respond to, what form of writing is desired, etc.)

Imitation or modelling is a general practice common in the teaching of genres (A-1). Among genre schemes teachers explicitly teach and have students analyze to use as models:

- Poetry. Particularly Haiku, Quintrain, Ballad, Sonnet Forms, Triolet, Diamante, Couplets, etc. (See Teaching Poetry by Stephanie Gray.)
- Story Writing. Very young children are quick to develop a sense of story, perceiving the need for beginnings, endings, conflict. The Wordless Story Books can be used throughout elementary school and junior high for individual and group composing of narratives, especially fantasy and adventure.
- Short Story Forms. See Point of View as a sequencing device for a composition course. (A-1)
- Literary and other expository essays. The five (or three or seven) paragraph essay maintains defenders who believe teaching a form which dictates a minimum number of main points, and the need for introduction, body, and conclusion, is indispensible to teaching exposition.
- The key shape organization is an elaboration by Sheridan Baker (The Practical Stylist) (see Vittoni, Log, 1977).
- Thesis sentences and paragraphs are seen as basic to expository essays. How to generate good thesis sentences which contain the implications or questions necessary for subsequent development of the essay is the subject of comment by Josephine Miles (Predication, BAWP), F. Crews in the Random House Handbood of Freshman English, Murphy (BAWP monograph), and many others. Keith Tandy (BAWP, 1977) suggests an inductive approach to thesis development which has much in common with clustering.

- Timed Writing. F. Zook (BAWP, 1977) and others advocate practice in timed writing, with analysis of quick ways to generate a topic and its development for typical writing test questions, or questions in the content areas.
- Survival Writing. Mastery of forms basic to business and social situations: the letter of application, the complaint letter, the personal letter, the business letter, and some report formats.
- Research Reporting. Methods of organizing and presenting information, referencing, bibliography format, etc. These conventions change from year to year and discipline to discipline. Some teachers now advocate not teaching a particular form, but having students buy copies of the MLA stylesheet or another reference for proper form, and using it consistently. Consistency of format is, of course, taught to be the key to convincing presentation.
- Titling/Captioning/Headlining -- an art in itself. Practice can be useful in helping students invent better titles, with the frequent side-effect of encouraging insights into key ideas, images, or meaning of a work, whether pictoral, musical, or verbal.
- Maxims, Proverbs, Epitaphs, Tom Swifties, etc. also provide practice in saying things pithily, in use of images, in imitating forms, etc.

Journalistic Forms and Conventions: Inverted pyramid: arranginging information so that the most important information is packed in summary form into the first paragraph(s) or lead, with subsequent paragraphs adding details of increasingly less central importance; derived from the practice followed by journalists whose stories will be cut from the end in order to fit available space, some teachers find this a useful way to help students determine what is important and what is not, what is central and what is of peripheral interest, to be included depending on how much room there is for rich development. (See also Saturation Reporting under "Community as Resource for Writers" - A-3.)

Human interest features humorists' columns, advice columns, sports reporting, editorials, cartoons, all provide different forms to stimulate writing shaped by purpose, with plentiful examples available as models.

(B-5) Style Sheets: Questions of mechanics and usage conventions are often well handled by creating a class "style-sheet" based on the style sheets of such newspapers as the New York Times or the Christian Science Monitor. (Every newspaper has one.)

C. Process of Composing

1) Thinking and imagining strategies; getting ideas; teacher-provided stimuli for writers.

2) Developing fluency; from thought to hand to paper.

3) Invention, pre-writing; strategies for shaping a piece, for finding a plan, organizing information.

4) Writing to assignment, from self or other; problem solving strategies, juggling constraints, using forms or patterns.

5) Revision, editing, post-writing; strategies; moving from writer to reader-based prose; revising with or without intervention; kinds of intervention (peer, teacher criticism); rewarding revision.

6) Integrating the process; simultaneous writing, planning, revision vs. dividing the process: uses of concentration of pre-writing, writing, or re-writing stages, value of the suspended editor, role of consciousness of process and strategies; sequences and inverted sequences in the process of composing (fluency-shape-correctness; form to idea; etc.).

(C-1) Audio-Visual Stimuli for Writing

Teachers have used music, tapings of sounds or poetry readings, slides, filmstrips, and film as stimuli in a variety of ways. Traditionally the stimuli are offered as pictures or stories have been used in the past -- a subject for writing. The student writes about what he sees or hears, either describing it, or commenting on it. Later (60's) students were encouraged to write about their feelings about the stimuli -- the picture, or music, etc.

More recently, stimuli have been seen as springboards, meant to provide an initial idea or some momentum, after which the student may go in any direction; the resulting piece of writing need make no reference to the original stimuli.

Audio-visual aids allow teachers to prepare elaborate programs of slides and music. One teacher, Fred Zook, BAWP, created programs that presented students with a rapidly changing pastiche of images and sounds, all of which were strongly evocative, intended to stimulate strong reactions. Students practiced generating thesis sentences -- strongly felt generalizations inspired by the visual sequences -- which they would use as ideas for later papers.

(C-1,2) Film/Photography/Art and Drawing/ Sculpting/Drama/Dancing for Motivation: the use of these visual arts as pre-writing stimuli: for discussion and writing in which students can explore and shape meaning about events/experiences which they eventually will write about.

Drama in the Classroom: a frequently-employed activity in the classroom (popularized in the United States through accounts of its use in British schools) used for motivational purposes, for introduction of content through role-playing/characterization, and for ideational and verbal fluency (Roger Mueller, in The Uses of English reports its discussion by American and British participants at the 1966 Dartmouth conference; numerous other sources have since updated and specified ideas presented there for classroom use).

(C-2) Focused Free Writing/Free Writing : either writing a stream of free association (without regard to language structures/correctness or coherence of ideas, topics) or free writing focused on a specific topic. (Ken Macrorie, Teaching Writing; Marlene Griffith, BAWP monograph.)

See also Oral Language Practice, Expressive Language (A-2, A-3), Dictation and Copying (B-1), Forced-Flow Writing (B-1).

(C-3) Clustering, Mapping, Ballooning

Three terms for similar activities, a departure from traditional methods of outlining papers. The new methods are intended to aid the student not merely in organizing his ultimate composition, but in selecting details, finding and making connections, inventing things to say about the topic, developing predications. The student makes lists of bits of information or classifies parts of his topic, "clustering" similar or parallel ideas, or associated details in visually distinct units. Drawing lines around these clusters makes "balloons" which can be tied together with lines like strings. "Mapping" involves planning pictoral arrangements of the clusters which express their relations, so that one's conception of the total piece of writing may be drawn into a picture like a "map" of a hand or a tree.

The rigidly parallel and hierarchical arrangement of traditional outlining is seen to be helpful only for limited kinds of discourse, and often, when demanded by a teacher, is written after a paper is finished, rather than playing a role in the planning stages. Clustering is seen as a prewriting planning and discovering technique. It appears more useful for generating ideas than for organizing the parts of a finished composition. Some maps, but not all, may include suggestions of how the clusters should be organized, which point will come first, etc. Teachers using this technique usually believe that much of the final planning and shaping of the discourse will have to come during writing, and that mapping or clustering should not be used, as outlining has been in the past, to force students to adhere to their first plan for organizing their information.

References: Dr. Gabriel Rico, San Jose State University; Marilyn Buckley, Univ. of Calif.,Berkeley; Owen Boyle, "Mapping: A Pre-Writing Strategy," BAWP monograph.

(C-4) Invention: From Form to Substance

"Invention" is a traditional rhetorical term for the process of finding a form for a piece of writing. The issue is whether invention can be taught through imparting awareness of some forms, some systems of organization or rules of ordering different kinds of discourse, or whether order must in each case rise out of the substance and purpose of the piece.

Richard Young discusses invention in Teaching Composition, 12 Bibliographical Essays, ed. Gary Tate.

Josephine Miles (BAWP presentation, 1977) and elsewhere in her work on predication and composing) argues that given forms may inspire substance: rather than having the student free-write to find an idea, then gradually shape it to an emerging form, we may equally well start from a form or kind of structure, and in writing to fit the form may discover ideas and relations (as in writing to the sonnet form). The existence of given forms if we are familiar with them may provide us with packages that help us write in response to certain rhetorical tasks.

See also Imitation, emulation.

To some extent practice in writing to given forms is advocated by those who are preparing students to write to assignment: i.e., write in response to topics, questions, or occasions established by others who may have customary forms they expect in response. This is not the case for Miles who sees writing to forms as part of the practice and exercise proper to artists in training. Teachers who emphasize the importance of self-imposed tasks or self-found topics may teach strategies for shaping discourse which do not involve writing to a pre-established form.

(C-5) Editing/Proofreading

Correctness of language mechanics and usage continue to elicit vastly divergent attitudes: those concerned with proficiency standards often equate these activities with the "basics" while those who teach writing as a three-stage process consider it the final and least important aspect of written discourse. (For an interesting attempt to separate it from other writing processes, see Winterowd, "The Huntington Beach, California Writing Project.")

(C-5) Revision/Rewriting; Producing Reader-ready Prose

Flower advocates writing one or more drafts, keeping in mind the reader only as much as happens naturally while planning and selecting and composing. Then in the final drafting, take the position of the reader and read critically, asking whether the information offered is actually of use to the reader, and whether it is presented so that the reader will not have to dig through too much detail to understand the main points, whether he will understand the connections the writer wishes him to notice, whether he is likely to become confused not only as to what is being said but as to why it is being said.

Don Murray also advocates taking the reader's stand in the final drafting stage. Both writing teachers are suggesting that there is more to revision than cosmetic changes, correction of misspellings, typos, slightly awkward sentences, etc. Revision, or "final editing," includes such concerns, but these teachers suggest that drastic rewriting may also be necessary to render a piece reader-ready.

Janet Emig, James Moffett, and many others have pointed out that traditionally "rewriting" has meant merely correcting surface errors rather than checking for general coherence, readability, completeness, clarity, or elegance.

Hirsch proposes ways of checking for "readability." Gunning has invented a "Fog Index" as a means of checking for over-use of nominal rather than verb forms, and/or poly-syllabic words.

(C-5, Revision/Rewriting cont.)

Other strategies for helping students learn how to produce reader-ready prose -- and how to tell when it is not quite ready — include:

1) Delayed re-reading/rewriting: Teachers and writers advocate letting a draft "sit" for several days or longer, then re-reading, imagining that you are seeing it for the first time. Major problems with your presentation may become more apparent as well as minor ones, and solutions may be more evident.

2) Role-taking: Describe a typical reader of your work who is different from yourself and preferably one who is hostile or at least unconvinced by your point of view. As you re-read your piece, write down the questions and comments a reader might think of. In revising, decide which of these should be addressed, which confusions or disagreements might be resolved by rewriting.

3) Peer Feedback: Share your paper with a "trial audience" of one or more peers who are asked to comment or question and make suggestions for clarification or improvement. (See Peer Response Groups.)

4) Checklist: Work from a checklist of concerns, compiled by the entire class out of the work of the peer response groups, or offered by the teacher. The list offers questions or suggestions about what to look for in re-reading to be sure a) the reader will understand and be affected as you wish; b) the appropriate conventions for this assignment have been followed; c) all (and only the) relevant information is included. A favorite checklist of many teachers is provided by the six rules in Orwell's Politics and the English Language or by the composition rules of Strunk and White, The Elements of Style. Others compile lists, especially of mechanical errors, from the M.L.A. Style Sheet, Newspaper style sheets, Edward Newman's popular works, or grammar texts.

5) Revising for Teacher Corrections: Students may be helped to make necessary revisions by receiving teacher direction in written or oral comments. Pointing out errors may be accompanied by references to lessons or correct forms.

In writing conferences, a teacher or tutor may provide instruction, or help a student identify general kinds of errors and develop extra practices

(C-5, Revision/Rewriting cont.)

or special strategies to correct these. Flower (Carnegie Mellon) and Griffith (Laney College) argue that the tutor functions best not as an editor who makes corrections or notes errors, but as a reader first and ally second, whose role is to understand what the writer intends, and point out what interfered with understanding. Recently, writing teachers have agreed strongly against rewriting or correcting an error for the student and have advocated naming the kind of error, demonstrating the general case, and then asking the student to revise, or rewrite, to remove the problem.

(C-6) Shaping: Composing a Particular Piece of Discourse.

Marlene Griffith describes the movement from fluency to shape to correctness, which reflects the notion that there may be three overlapping stages in the writing process, which for beginning students may be usefully separated. Fluency is achieved by free writing without concern for the particular shape of the finished piece, and while suspending our concern with correctness. Shaping occurs when we take the kernel ideas we found during our free writing and begin to construct a coherent discourse.

Griffith believes that narrating memories of personal experiences imposes its own kind of shape, with memory-selecting,salient details. Learning to shape presentations of information (exposition) or argument is more difficult for many writers. Prewriting exercises of charting, graphing, mapping, clustering, etc. may help, but eventually we must find sentences that express relations, and build paragraphs that move an idea.

Linda Flower, Carnegie Mellon, believes that the writing process of good writers involves "juggling constraints" placed on the writer by the nature of his subject, his purpose, his realtion to his audience, etc. Planning goes on throughout the process of composing, with the writer changing direction and even basic purpose as he discovers new relations between ideas or better ways of expressing them, or changes his intention with relation to his reader.

Griffith, Flower, and Miles agree that different individuals work best with different composing strategies -- some being aided by working to given forms, some being handicapped and distracted from adequate expression of an idea. Both approaches — form to substance or substance to form -- are found among writers at all levels of experience and ability, so neither can be associated with more "advanced" or more "basic" writing.

D. Evaluation and the Writing Program

1) Drills, dry runs as practice and testing heats; indirect measures of mastery of writing elements.

2) Evaluating whole discourse holistically.

3) Evaluating whole discourse analytically.

4) Making use of assessment results; reporting to students, parents, staff; approaches to grades and credit for achievement or ability.

5) Direct and indirect measures of effect; long and short term measures; assessing attitudes toward writing, gains in achievement level, etc.

(D-1) Indirect Measures of Writing Skills

All drills, exercises, and dry runs which are not actual compositions can serve as indicators of mastery of particular writing skills. Standardized writing tests are usually made up of similar items which measure mastery of component skills rather than actual writing performance. Of these measures, spelling and usage tests (tests of punctuation, mechanics, standard usage) correspond least well to performance on holistic measures, with vocabulary and reading tests corresponding somewhat better. ETS researcher, S. Valentine, reported at the AERA Convention (San Francisco, 1979) that a long neglected objective test item which required students to re-order scrambled sentences in a paragraph -- a test of organization and coherence skills -- proved to have the best correspondence with holistic measures of writing skill. All of these measures have some correspondence with holistically measured performance (from .3 to .6) and have the advantage of being reliably scored. These measures are criticized as primary tools for evaluation of writing skills on two grounds: first they do not actually measure writing performance, and because correlation is not perfect -- or even high, they can be misleading in their verdict on particular students' levels of ability to write. Second, the effect of "teaching to the test" in this case means that students may become proficient at doing these exercises, but will not give them practice in composing.

(D-2) Holistic or Rapid-Impression Marking of Papers -- Rank Ordering on General Quality

Holistic evaluation of writing asks readers to respond to an entire piece of writing, judging its overall effectiveness as a communication within the constraints of the given topic and instructions to writers. Readers rank order pieces of student writing, using a set rating scale, usually of from 1-4 to 1-9 points. Typically, each paper is rated by at least two readers for a total score, to improve reliability of the score. Readers are usually trained to increase agreement by practice rating anchor papers while discussing their personal responses to the quality of writing represented at each scoring level.

The practice of holistic marking, using scoring guides and/or sample essays, is in wide use by BAWP schools and districts, and has recently been advocated by the state of California for local district proficiency testing. The BAWP model of holistic assessment, originally intended for program evaluation and as a staff development tool, was developed at Sir Frances Drake High School by Kate Blickhahn, and is known as the Drake Assessment. It is modelled on the practices described by Paul Diederich in Measuring Growth in Writing (1976).

Similarly trained holistic assessors are used by the Educational Testing Service in scoring the English composition test on the College Board Exam (see Godshalf, et al., 1966) and by the ETS scoring of the Advanced Placement exams in English composition. Holistic scoring, as a general practice, is described in the context of other kinds of scoring of whole essays by Cooper and Odell in Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging (1978). Articles on holistic assessment for proficiency testing and on the making of good prompts for writing appear in the May, 1979 issue of the Network Newsletter of the National Writing Project (Berkeley). Descriptions of local assessment plans devised by school districts include the monograph from Los Angeles City Schools, Julia Gottesman's Common Ground for Assessment; C.Stitt, the Jefferson County, Colorado Writing Assessment, 1974-78; and the Modesto City Schools Writing Assessment (Calif.).

In addition, the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation has brought out a package on creating a writing assessment plan, based on holistically

(D-2 cont.)

scored essays.

The state of California holistic writing assessment guide for K-8, and for 9-12, is available from Beth Brenneman, State Dept. of Education, Sacramento, California.

"Rapid impression marking" by multiple readers is also described and researched in the Schools Council Bulletin #12, HMSO, London, England.

(D-3) Special Indexes for Evaluating Writing Samples

Fog Index (Gunning): Provides a formula for indicating what level of education a reader should have to easily understand a particular piece of writing. Used as an editor's check, not a guide to composing, it can be a tool to evaluate vocabulary level. Method: Count all 3-or-more syllable words (other than proper nouns, combined forms like ditchdigger, bookkeeper, or verbs which become 3-syllables by adding endings like -ed, -ing, etc.). Add the total of such words to the average number of words per sentence and multiply by .4. Example: 15 words per sentence + 10 3-syllable words = 25; 25 x .4 = 10.0. The result indicates the years of formal education your reader should have to easily understand your writing. Time and Newsweek run about 11; Atlantic Monthly and Harper's, 12; Reader's Digest, 10, etc.

Don Graves Index of Potentiality and performance (with Don Murray) Graves has developed four scales to rate student writing, for use by teachers and evaluators, to present an index or profile of writing performance. A piece is rated four times, on a scale of 0-10 in response to the following questions:

1. How do you rate the writer's success in satisfying the reader's need for specific information?
2. How do you rate the student's poetential as a writer?
3. How do you rate the writer's success in organizing specific information so the reader understands its significance?
4. How do you rate the writer's success in using language to communicate his subject (idea)?

Examples are used to demonstrate differences in each area.

Holistic ratings on five factors: Andrew Wilkinson, University of Exeter England, advocates holistic scoring of samples, but dividing readers into five kinds of response groups (or moving the same readers into different frames of reference) so that a piece of writing is evaluated separately for what it reveals aobut the writer's level of style, affect, cognition, moral development.

(D-3 cont.)

Analytic Scale (Diederich): Diederich (op. cit.) describes the so-called analytic scale made up of the five factors which he determined most strongly affected a group of raters' holistic responses. He used his analytic scale, consisting of ratings in the areas of usage an and mechanics, ideas, organization, diction, flavor, to train readers who later read holistically, having internalized their agreed-on weightings of these five factors. Later, the factor,handwriting,was added.

(D-3) Program-based and Theory-based Analytic Ratings of Essays

In addition to holistic ratings, primary trait assessment based on limiting judgment to the major traits of certain modes of discourse, by limiting the topic, it is possible to leave topic or prompt rather broad, but to design methods of analyzing essays after they are scored holistically to discover what features or patterns account for the holistic scores which might be especially explained by specific kinds of instruction in writing.

A count of T-units or of cummulative or complex sentences is one such analysis, appropriate where sentence variety or sentence-combining has been stressed in a program.

Further program-based analyses were developed by C. Keech for research on writing programs for the Evaluation Unit of the BAWP (see BAWP monographs: "The Write Occasion," "Writing from Given Information," "Showing not Telling," 1979). These included ratings of types of openings and closings, expecially in solving compare and contrast problems, counts of certain kinds of syntactic forms based on stylistic analysis developed by Stephanie Gray (BAWP).

Such analytic ratings may include ratings of characteristics, patterns of error or patterns of use at several levels of discourse:

Word level: Vocabulary rating (See Fog Index (D-3).

Sentence level: See Kellog Hunt, Syntactic Development; John Mellon, Transformational Sentence Combining; Kate Blickhahn (unpublished) New Drake Analysis of Sentence Types; S. Gray, stylistic analysis of syntactic elements as part of unpublished teaching materials, "Writing from Given Information."

Discourse level:

1. Content hierarchy - a hierarchical organization specified by abstraction level of each T-unit (Christensen, Davis/Nold).
2. Functional slots - a hierarchical organization specified by functional relationships between a topic sentence and all other sentences or T-units (Becker).
3. Thematic heirarchy - a hierarchical organization specified by themes in various levels of text; concerned with "main idea" or "central thread" in

in discourse (Jones).

4. Narrative structure and story grammars - a hierarchical organization specified by the functional relationship among narrative components (personal experience or fictional narratives) (Thorndyke, Labov).

5. Essential rhetorical features - called "primary trait scoring" by its developers, a way of identifying the discourse features (their types, sequence, incidence, relationships) peculiar to major discourse types: explanation, persuasion, expression (Lloyd-Jones).

6. Structure of argument - hierarchical diagramming the structure of argument or persuasion, based on work of Toulmin (Kneupper).

(For references on Discourse Levels, see Charles R. Cooper, Director of Composition, Third World College, UC San Diego, La Jolla, California.)

(D-3) Error Counts

A traditional method of evaluating student writing has been to count numbers, and in some cases, types of errors. A sophisticated version of this approach has been used in determining passing quality of essays for the Subject A Examination at U.C. Berkeley (Kim Davis, chair). Each error is marked, with different weightings assigned for errors of different seriousness.

(D-3) Primary Trait Scoring (or Essential Rhetorical Features)

A way of identifying the discourse features (their types, sequence, incidence, relationships) peculiar to major discourse types: explanation, persuasion, expression.

(D-4) Credit/No Credit/No Grade

Following the suggestion of James Britton and others, an alternative "Grading" system of giving credit for work completed is established to encourage students to use writing efforts to explore, try new forms, etc., without fear of punishment should they not succeed the first time.

In support of this practice, Paul Diederich (Measuring Growth in Writing) suggests that most teachers "over-evaluate," and that grading or rating compositions one or two times per marking period should be sufficient to establish a comparative ranking of students. The rest of the time, the student is allowed to concentrate on improving his writing in particular ways, rather than on ranking himself overall against other students.

(D-4) Reporting and Comparing Assessment Results

Standard practice, observed by both NAEP and ETS as well as by local assessments, demands that reports of outcomes of writing assessments include actual writing samples to demonstrate how scores were arrived at and what level of writing performance they represent. It seems unavoidable that the assigning of scores to student work will vary from assessment to assessment, no matter how much readers manage to agree within each assessment. This is partly a function of the fact that each group of readers shapes and interprets the scoring guide, and partly the fact that holistic scoring rank orders a given sample of papers, and these samples may differ dramatically from one scoring occasion to another.

To say that a paper rates a 6 on a scale of 1-6 is only to say that it is a top paper for that population, judged by those readers. In reporting such a score, a description of scoring criteria with sample papers from the entire range of ability represented in the population makes interpretation of the numerical score possible.

To make comparison of scores possible between two readings of testings — either from different populations, or from the same population in different years, NAEP uses a third reading which pools a large sample of papers from each of the two initial readings. Scores on the combined reading are used as a kind of standard score, and provide a common factor to which initial scores can be compared to determine how different they are from one another in what they represent on a common scale.

The third reading, or combined assessment, may also be done using various analytic counts of factors. Such analytic counts may not account for all the factors which influenced a holistic score, but they may provide a fairly reliable calibration for holistic results, if the analytic measures are derived and carefully correlated with holistic scores on the actual sample of papers.

(D-5) Portfolio Evaluation

A case study approach for evaluation of individual ability or for program evaluation and research, the use of writers' portfolios is based on the practice of other performing arts fields, and on the observation of the typical unevenness of performance by student writers, and the variety of factors affecting performance on any one writing occasion. Schools Council Bulletin #12, op. cit., recommends multiple samples of student writing collected over a few days of testing. Portfolio evaluation may include sample papers from over a period of time to demonstrate improvement or development of skills, or a collection of writings on different kinds of topics to represent a range of abilities.

(D-5) Error Analysis

Error counting is accompanied in some places by various kinds of error analysis for purposes not only of selecting pass-fail papers, but of diagnosing patterns of error for guiding students and teachers in their work on student writing. Mina Shaughnessey's Errors and Expectations is the seminal work suggesting that clues to a writer's self-defeating strategies can be found in an analysis of the kinds of errors he makes.

Bill Robinson, San Francisco State (BAWP, 1977) used error analysis to train teachers in his basic college writing course, and identified two major types of error: errors of knowledge, where a simple, generalized rule will teach the information needed to avoid the error; and errors of process, where errors may recur because of pauses and discontinuities in the act of composing. The cure for the latter is development of proof-reading and editing strategies, as well as the habit of re-scanning what has been written before continuing after a pause in composing.

For research and evaluation, as well as diagnosis and treatment, Elizabeth Harrison-Smith (Sacramento State University) applies a Writing Miscue Inventory which identifies, analyzes and classifies errors according to the loss of meaning each entails, from loss, or partial loss, to no loss. This provides a weighting that indicates the effect of the error on the readability of the composition. In a research study, Harrison-Smith used her WMI to measure changes in college freshman writing over a semester of writing instruction.

(D-5) Attitude Measures

Janet Emig at Rutgers University has developed attitude scales for measuring student attitudes toward writing. C. Keech (BAWP Evaluation) has developed a class evaluation form which reveals changes in student attitude toward writing while evaluating a writing course. Such measures include questions about how much and what kind of writing students may do outside of class, what kinds of in-class writing students prefer, whether students prefer to write to a given assignment or to write on self-iniated occasions, how much drafting a student usually does (note-taking, outlining, rewriting, etc.), who might be asked to read his writing, etc.

(D-5) Long-term Measures of Writing Growth

Given the fact that improvement on writing usually becomes measurable statistically using holistic assessment only after the student has matured a full year, in which case maturation probably accounts for more of the difference than does the effect of a particular program, it sometimes takes several years before comparisons can be made between programs. In a consistently good program, heightened improvement will accrue over several years, so that well instructed students will ultimately out-perform poorly instructed ones, Given a population of students at roughly the same achievement level at the beginning of a year, however, few programs make noticeable differences when compared to other programs at the end of that year.

This possiblity of accrued effects of a superior program require an attempt at long term measures of writing improvement. Although no program to date has compiled all the data necessary to separate effects of maturation from those of training, a few examples of this type of effort include the Modesto (Calif.) City Schools Writing Assessment, the Drake High School (Fairfax, Calif.) Writing Assessment, and the Jefferson Co. (Colorado) Writing Assessment.

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